

Women Rise to Power in Patriarchal Democracies in the Caribbean

A Three-Part Case Study of Curacao, Guyana and Haiti

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1: Introduction

The current patriarchal configuration of various democracies, such as those in Latin America and the Caribbean, originates from late-Medieval Europe (c. 1301-1500) (Clarke, 2004, p.2). This Judeo-Catholic patriarchy was inherited by much of the Caribbean during colonial times and has since allowed males to play the role of leading *machos*. However, during the last decades of the twentieth century, women have been dismantling traditional gender roles and structures in every aspect of life - ranging from domestics to politics. This trend has been particularly evident in the Caribbean, where Dominica was distinguished in 1980 for electing Eugenia Charles as the first woman Prime Minister in the region. Since then, women such as Janet Jagan, Maria Liberia-Peters and Portia Simpson-Miller have held the highest of offices in the Caribbean. Conversely, some of the most developed democracies such as the US, Japan and the Netherlands have never elected a woman to lead the state, further accentuating a Caribbean phenomenon. Jalalzai (2008) describes this phenomenon as a paradox whereby female executives are often to be found in nations with less egalitarian (read: patriarchal) cultures located in the developing world. This is paradoxical, as it is expected that women come to political power in countries where they have a greater status, not vice versa (Ibid).

Furthermore, according to Jalazai (2013), women rise to power through various pathways, including kinship, education, and political resume. Other scholars argue that specific types of democracies, such as parliaments, allow women to rise to power (Whicker & Isaacs, 1999). For the most part, the paradox whereby women rise to power in patriarchal societies is not satisfactorily accounted for in current literature. However, patriarchy functions differently in the Caribbean than it does in the West, as the legacy of colonialism creates its own set of unequal relations that affect gender, power and ethnic relations indicating that generalisations about women's rise to power cannot be made. Therefore, this thesis seeks to contribute to studies on political leadership in the Caribbean and literature on women's leadership by conducting an in-depth analysis of multiple variables, such as political resume, education levels and shattered glass-ceilings, which allow women to rise to power in diverse contexts. Moreover, we argue that it is a combination of multiple variables *and* favourable context that lead to the rise of women to the highest office in their state. Accordingly, the following research question is addressed: How do women rise to power in democratic patriarchal societies in the Caribbean?

To answer the above question, a three-part case study of three Caribbean states (Curaçao, Guyana and Haiti) with varying colonial histories, governmental systems and cultures is conducted to reveal pathways and contexts that allow women to come to power. The structure of this thesis is as follows: Firstly, a literature review is presented along with the theoretical and methodological frameworks to set the scope of this paper. Secondly, a case-study of Curaçao, a country that has had five women executives is performed. Thirdly, the Guyana case of the sole president, Janet Jagan is observed. Fourthly, Haiti, a country with one female head of state, but three complimenting heads of government, is analysed. Finally, there is a concise comparative chapter that highlights reoccurring themes, before the concluding chapter that summaries the findings.

2: Literature Review

Scholarly work in this area can be divided into two groups: one that focuses on rudimentary pathways to power and the other that focuses on atmosphere and setting. Jalalzai (2004) presents the most comprehensive study in the field of pathways to power for women through the large-N study, *Women Political Leaders*, which accounts for every woman executive in the world. She identifies that there are specific reoccurring pathways that allow women to get elected, namely through male-familial ties¹, education level, political resumes and a ‘broken glass-ceiling’, whereby a woman-executive has already taken office (Jalalzai, 2008). Furthermore, Jalalzai (2008) explains that an intact glass-ceiling is a factor by itself that can hinder a pathway to power, which can explain the lack of women leaders in some countries. Nonetheless, while her pioneering, substantial study offers great insights, she does not discuss context. Thus, she treats these pathways as though they function in a vacuum.

Other feminist scholarship focuses on the governmental systems through which women rise to power, indicating the significance of context. Whicker and Isaacs (1999) identify that parliamentary systems are the most advantageous setting for women to rise to power and conversely find presidential systems are to be the most disadvantageous systems for women. The logic behind this is that in a parliamentary system women are able to bypass a [gender] biased public and be appointed by their party as the leader (Ibid). In parliamentary systems,

¹ For instance, she suggests that it is through Bill Clinton that Hillary Clinton had been able to come far in the U.S. elections in 2016 (Jalalzai, 2016).

the prime minister is required to partake in more feminine tasks, such as collaboration and negotiation between the branches of government, whereas presidents in presidential systems are able to act more swiftly and unilaterally, without the consent of the legislative, making it a more masculine post (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1996). However, this still does not sufficiently account for the entire environment through which women rise to power.

Collards and Reynolds (2007) consider both leadership and gender studies that inspired the main ambition of this thesis: bringing together variables and context. Collards and Reynolds (2007) note the importance of culture and context in shaping multiple feminine and masculine identities and argue for a more culturally inclusive theory of gender and leadership. In addition, they find that the discussion of gender should be accompanied by a consideration of ethnicity and race issues (Collards & Reynolds, 2007). Particularly given the legacy of colonialism, this study emphasises the value of addressing contextual factors by looking at ethnicity, how genders are (varyingly) constructed in states, the international setting or any other such aspect that could influence a pathway to power.

According to this literature review, the following aspects contribute to women's rise to power: the (broken) glass-ceiling, education, political experience or resume, familial ties, governmental system, cultural (gender, race and ethnic) and/or international context. We predict that all of these factors will work in unison to contribute to a woman's rise to power. Consequently, precisely these variables and contexts are discussed in each of the cases for a comprehensive understanding of women's rise to power in the Caribbean.

3: Theoretical Framework: Feminist Epistemology

Garner (2008) defines patriarchy as “women's oppression by men”; however, he proceeds to argue that the term is highly contestable. This controversy is particularly present in the Caribbean where gender², race and ethnicity intersect. Giddings argues that historically, patriarchy has neglected the significance of white women in colonisation, as unlike white men, black men stand differently in relation to women depending on the race of the woman (Mohammed, 2004, p.229). Scholars such as Chevannes (2001) have argued for black male

² We consciously use the term ‘gender’ rather than ‘sex’, since gender refers to socially constructed identity rather than the biological body, which is in accordance with Judith Butler's (1990) arguments in *Gender Trouble*.

marginalisation, demonstrating that patriarchy can present itself in many forms of hierarchy and dominance, not simply or solely of a man over a woman. Therefore, this paper takes an intersectional, critical approach to unmask the nature of patriarchy in the Caribbean. Intersectional theory argues that overlapping and immanent elements of identity —culture, gender, religion, class— interact dynamically to produce power relations or struggles (Brah, 1999). Traditionally, theories treat these elements separately in order to not “dilute the struggle.” Nonetheless, addressing the overlap of systems of oppression exemplifies a multitude of struggles (Ibid, p.10). Therefore, although all women are oppressed, black women are the most oppressed group of women.

According to Mohammed (2004), postmodern feminist epistemology is useful for understanding Caribbean genders, as it allows us to examine the constant de/reconstruction of the sexual divisions and gender over time and thereby permits diversity and rejects false ‘universalism’ of any sort. This justifies this study’s Pan-Caribbean approach, as we seek to exhibit that diversity (in terms of historical and social experiences) results in differing gender constructions. By analysing the Caribbean context, this thesis goes beyond the ‘white’ feminist experience. This is a component of the (modern) Third Wave feminism that seeks to venture beyond dichotomies of the genders. Third Wave feminism, unlike previous waves, does not seek to emancipate women directly, but rather strives for an egalitarian society for women and men (Rheddock, 2004).

With these feminist considerations in mind, this research evaluates context in threefold: as political, culture/ethnicity and international. Discussing these aspects applies feminist methodology, which asserts that gender does not operate in a vacuum, but in a more complex, constructed setting. Although the significance of the aspects varies per case, contextualisation allows us to indicate additional factors that may overlap, hinder or positively influence women’s path to power. Nonetheless, these are not the only aspects of setting to consider, since, for instance, governmental systems can also be influential.

Political leadership studies tend to focus on the gains that women have made in the legislative parts of government by analysing the remarkably high numbers of women in the legislature. The executive, however, is the highest seat and therefore, arguably the most significant. By neglecting the lack of women in the executive, many studies fail to understand why women rise to the top. Furthermore, the abovementioned studies strictly discuss parliamentary versus

presidential governmental systems, and do not consider the power of women in amalgamated governments, such as semi-presidential or semi-parliamentary systems. For these reasons, this paper works within the scope of the woman executive, in a spectrum of governmental systems. Nevertheless, when discussing the semi systems, this paper looks at both the head of state and head of government to assess whether our observations match with those of other scholars, namely that it is easier to become prime minister than it is to become president.

4: Methodology

This thesis utilises a causal approach to consider the various pathways and contexts that allow women to rise to power. It performs a qualitative three-part case study to indicate how women rise to executive power in patriarchal Caribbean democracies. Unlike Guyana and Haiti, Curaçao holds an autonomous—not independent—status in relation to its former colonizer. However, this variable does not hinder this research, as the Netherland’s influence is limited to Curaçao’s foreign affairs, which includes external relations, defence and Dutch nationality (Rijksoverheid, 2016). In other areas, Curaçao establishes its own policy (Ibid). Thus, Curaçao is self-governing and its elections are organised independently of outside powers.

The three cases were selected for their specific attributes: Curaçao is a (relatively) well-off, parliamentary democracy with a racially heterogeneous population and Dutch colonial history; Guyana, despite being a low-income country, is a growing country, with a presidential system and a racially heterogeneous population defined by British colonial history; and Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere with a semi-presidential system and a relatively homogenous population defined by a (briefly Spanish and) French colonial past. In addition, the countries vary in the number of female executives they have hosted. These varying structural, political and colonial issues allow for a comprehensive analysis of the Caribbean situation.

An array of types of sources are collected and reviewed for this study. Journal articles, books, newspaper articles and interviews are extensively referenced throughout. One of the most unique and informative aspects of this thesis are the two hour-long interviews that were personally conducted with ex-Prime Ministers Maria-Liberia Peters and Emily de Jongh-Elhage in Curaçao. Their profound personal insights add greater depth to the study. For the

cases of Haiti and Guyana, interviews were also analysed; however, these were pre-recorded (and not specific to this topic).

5: Analysis

5.1: The Netherlands Antilles or the Matriarchal Antilles?

The island³ of Curaçao scores particularly well in the number of women that have acted as its executive leader; it has produced five women Prime Ministers: Lucinda Da Costa Gomez, Maria Liberia-Peters, Suzy Römer, Mirna Godett and Emily de Jongh-Elhage. This chapter discusses the abovementioned variables in relation to the women's rise to power. The first variable we discuss relates to Jalalzai's (2004) claim that a significant factor hindering women's rise to power is the glass ceiling. In 1977, Lucinda da Costa Gomez became the first woman acting/interim female Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles. However, many consider Liberia-Peters as the first female Prime Minister. For instance, the newspaper *Tropical View* (1988) stated, "Liberia-Peters first woman Prime Minister in the Kingdom." There are various reasons for the confusion: Da Costa Gomez was an acting Prime Minister, and only held the position for a fortnight. However, constitutionally she was the first Prime Minister, but whether her short-lived term broke the glass ceiling remains debatable. Nevertheless, Liberia-Peters was able to overcome the glass ceiling and thus opened the highest office in the executive for other women. In order to understand how she managed to accomplish this, other variables that affect women's rise to power must be analysed, as this point alone does not provide a sufficient explanation.

According to Jalalzai (2004), educational background is a reoccurring pathway to power and particularly the field of study as a component of educational background is significant, as "certain fields may foster greater political experience than others" (pg.94). In the Curaçao case, the women have great variation in their level of education and fields of study. Da Costa Gomez received high school education (at the MULO level), Liberia-Peters was awarded a Masters in Pedagogy, Suzy Römer a Law Degree, Mirna Godett a lower secondary school diploma (MAVO), and Emily de Jongh-Elhage attended Teacher's College (E. De Jongh-

³ Prior to 2010, Curaçao always controlled most seats in parliament in the Netherlands Antilles. Therefore, Curaçao by default elected the Prime Minister. These women were executives of the Netherlands Antilles, not just Curaçao, arguably making the achievement even more significant. In 2010, the political entity of the Netherlands Antilles ceased to exist.

Elhage, personal communication, August 26, 2016; M. Liberia-Peters, personal communication, August 5, 2016; NRC, 2003; Tropical View, 1988; Trouw, 1998). When implementing Jalalzai's (2004) standards whereby the "[e]ducational level is measured from low to high with low signifying high school degree or lower, medium a college degree, and high a graduate or professional degree", only two of the women, Römer and Liberia-Peters, have a high education level, whereas De Jongh-Elhage, has a medium level education with her college degree and Da Costa Gomez and Godett have low levels of education.

In the fields of study, Römer's Law Degree was the most advantageous in fostering political experience for her entrance into politics as the Minister of Justice. This was evident when *Trouw* (1998) published an article stating that despite her emotionality, as she was often considered fervent, Römer had "better papers" than her competitor for the job, politician Errol Cova. Nonetheless, it was Liberia-Peter's passionate performance as a teacher and initiator of educational programs for elderly, that prompted Da Costa Gomez to convince Liberia-Peters to enter politics (M. Liberia-Peters, personal communication, August 5, 2016). Thus, fields of study can have spillover effects and should not be considered as black-and-white. Furthermore, education can be a pathway to politics, as it was with Römer, since studying with the intention to enter politics improves the likelihood that one will enter into politics in Curaçao. It appears that a particular field of study is not essential, while the education level is slightly more significant. Nevertheless, almost half of the female Prime Ministers were not highly educated, rendering the pathway to power through education questionable. De Jongh-Elhage was briefly a teacher before she switched to real estate exemplifying that her degree was not aimed at ensuring a place in politics, whereas Godett was entirely untrained for the position.

The familial ties variable remains one of the strongest pathways to power for women. Da Costa Gomez was married to Dr. Moises da Costa Gomez, the first Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles who popularly advocated for the political emancipation of the Netherlands Antilles. Liberia-Peters was married to a distinguished civil servant Niel Liberia (Haagse Courant, 1988); however, he was not considerably popular in island politics. Römer previously stated that she was born into a 'PNP-nest', as her mother was one of the first active women in the People's National Party (PNP) and her father was also involved in politics (Mols, 1998). Römer's case demonstrates that power through familial ties not only entails analysing the husband's ties, but also the elders' ties whereby parental ties and/or pressures

can foster a political career trajectory. Römer's husband, Carl Camilia, was a meditation expert (Trouw, 1998) and thus he was not a familial tie that could get her to power.

Godett had familial ties through both her prominent father "Papa" Godett, the founder of the Worker's Liberation political party (FOL) and her brother Anthony Godett (Trouw, 2003). Having two political ties assisted Godett in coming to power in an unprecedented and rare manner. In addition, De Jongh-Elhage had various familial ties as her husband was in politics, and together, the couple was befriended with Miguel Pourier, the founder of the political Party for the Restructured Antilles (PAR). Furthermore, in our interview, De Jongh Elhage stated that her family was well-known and esteemed on the island, further enhancing her chances of coming to power. Familial ties were instrumental to almost all women, with the exception of Liberia-Peters. This is remarkable, as she had to (arguably) overcome the glass ceiling without utilising familial associations. While familial ties are not obligatory to become elected, they remain a prevalent pathway to power for women.

According to Jalalzai (2008), having political experience is another pathway to power for women. Da Costa Gomez had participated in various political activities prior to being appointed as acting Prime Minister, holding positions ranging from her husband's secretary, Minister of Public Health and Welfare in 1973, to spearheading legislation on women's legal capacity (M. Liberia-Peters, personal communication, August 5, 2016). Liberia-Peters was a career politician previously holding seats as the representative of the Curaçao Island Council, as member of the Legislature for the Antilles and as Minister of Economic Affairs (Ibid). Römer had two years of experience in one political position, namely as the Minister of Justice prior to becoming acting Prime Minister (Trouw, 1998). Godett had no political experience prior to becoming Prime Minister (NRC, 2003) and De Jongh-Elhage was a career politician holding a variety of political positions prior to being elected: as member of the PAR party, as member of the Island Council for PAR and the Commissioner of Public Works and Housing (E. De Jongh-Elhage, personal communication, August 26, 2016). In most cases, having an extensive political resume is useful, but not entirely necessary when becoming Prime Minister. Respectively, Römer and Godett had a short and no political resume prior to being Prime Minister. Thus, it seems that in the Curaçao case, proving oneself through an extensive political resume is not more obligatory for women than it is for men.

According to numerous sources (Whicker & Isaacs, 1999; Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1996), women are more likely to succeed in coming to power in parliamentary systems than in presidential systems. Whicker and Isaacs (1999) state that in parliamentary systems, people primarily vote for a party and its ideas and not for specific people. This would enlarge women's chances of being elected. However, this argument is somewhat unconvincing, as it seems unlikely that constituents would vote for a party spearheaded by a person considered unfit to represent the people properly.

In Curaçao, Da Costa Gomez, Liberia-Peters and Römer were appointed the position as acting Prime Minister. In the occasion of coalition-building, women also managed to achieve the position of Prime Minister in Curaçao. This was demonstrated by Römer in 1998, when she negotiated an agreement with her coalition, allowing her to become Prime Minister and her coalition partner to hold the position of Vice-Prime Minister (Allochtonenkrant, 1998). In such an instance, the parliamentary system is not always more beneficial to women, but can also act as a neutral or even as a challenging variable. Consequently, this also suggests that other variables need to be considered for a complete explanation of women's rise to power.

Godett is the best example of how a parliamentary system can simplify the path to power. She was placed in the position by the party because of her familial connections to replace her brother Anthony Godett in 2003, since he was on trial for corruption and fraud. While demonstrating that she was able to become a Prime Minister effortlessly, it was on his behalf: "To me, he is the prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles. He won the elections, and I am glad that I can do this for him" (NRC, 2003). On the one hand, because Godett was governing on behalf of her *male* sibling, she trivialises that she was a woman in power. On the other hand, it demonstrates the power of the familial ties variable, as this was the direct reason for her appointment as Prime Minister.

While other scholars (Adler, 1996; Jalalzai, 2004) have been able to demonstrate that the abovementioned variables are the pathways to power for women, they do not specify in what type of society these women rise to power. In addition, it remains unclear how a glass ceiling is broken or why Römer was able to convince a male that she, not he, should occupy the highest office. Therefore, the next section considers the setting to exemplify that context is of the utmost importance in a patriarchal society, starting with the cultural context of ethnicity.

Hoetink (1958) provided the first systematic analysis of the development of Curaçao's ethnic profile particularly with reference to the Dutch Shell Company's far-reaching effects on the immigration of both Afro-Caribbean blacks and Dutch whites. However, Römer (1998) explains beyond the refinery to account for the evolutionary process of social change that developed from being predominantly stratified along racial and ethnic lines to class lines. This can explain the ease by which women rose to power regardless of their ethnicity in Curaçao.

In terms of gender culture, Curaçao is known for being a patriarchal society, with the popular sayings such as “a man can fall in the mud and he remains clean, but on a woman you will see it” or girls being told, “your name is sit and watch.” Marcha and Verweel (2005) confirm the existence of this culture through their ethnographic study with thirty women about men. Their findings demonstrate that men display all the characteristics of *machismo*, whereby they find themselves “irresistible, tough, proud and important” (Marcha & Verweel, 2005, p.121). Men are also described as being socialised, in part by their mothers, into being absent from responsibility and from family life (Ibid), which reinforces the woman's powers as she manages the family life. This cultural trend is also confirmed by quantitative studies, as statistics confirm that 40% of women are the head of the household (UNDP, 2011). In a follow-up, ethnographic study with men about women, Marcha and Verweel (2009) discovered that males adore women, calling them “goddesses” (pg.140). In the ethnography, males confirm that women are caring, strong and the dominating core of the family because of the absence of the Curaçaoan man (Ibid, p.138).

It is important to analyse the associations between men and women in a specific country since “[m]asculinity and femininity are relational constructs, the definition of either depends on upon the definition of the other” (Kimmel, 1989, p.12). In our interview with Liberia-Peters, she stated that the role of women is highly valued in Curaçao by men. She gave the example that if a man has to go to an important meeting, he will always attend the meeting with a female figure (whether that is his mother or his wife) and that the woman will lead the discussion. Moreover, she stated that “a man can be macho ... but sometimes they need the woman to put on the diapers [for them]”, thereafter revealing that more males had voted for her than women (Personal communication, August 5, 2016). Taking these factors into account, it becomes clearer why women were able to rise to executive power in Curaçao. Evidently, patriarchy in Curaçao is a multi-layered, complex order intrinsically coexisting with matriarchy. Chevannes (2001) suggests that this is a pattern more frequently found in the

Caribbean, but he warns against finding simple explanations as individual development and social contexts in life vary greatly.

There is patriarchy in the sense that men have more freedom, have better wages and are less frequently held accountable. However, it is also evident that this patriarchy is simultaneously challenged by the role of women as well as by males' admiration for women that is rooted in the idolisation of mothers. This raises questions pertaining to whether one should label Curaçao as patriarchal. While there is a culture of *machismo*, women play a significant role. Thus, Curaçao could also be considered as matriarchal in culture, with women being the centre of the household, which is an aspect that has gradually spilt-over into the political field. Nonetheless, males still benefit from income disparities (UNDP, 2011), indicating that a further study should be done in this area. For the purpose of this study, we can conclude that women have power and respect from men in the cultural context of Curaçao. This is essential as having respect and power facilitates women's rise to power in patriarchal societies using various pathways.

During our interview, Liberia-Peters stated that the international context has also influenced island politics. She stated that in 1975, the United Nations (UN) initiated International Women's Year, which created a local "fever" aiming to have as many women as possible on the party tickets, bolstering women's presence in politics (Personal communication, August 5, 2016). Notably, Liberia-Peters and Römer attended university in the Netherlands, which may further qualify as international experiences that shaped their ambitions. Thus, international pressures also ensured that women received more attention and political advantages.

The interviews with Liberia-Peters and De Jongh-Elhage confirmed feminist conceptions, which find that women focus on different issues than males. For instance, De Jongh-Elhage stated that she was laughed at when she chose the education portfolio over the highly-sought after tourism portfolio even though she had first pick (Personal communication, August 26, 2016). She also stated that women conduct politics differently, "for women, togetherness and respect are primary. Men are more closed-off." (Ibid). When examining the political context in which women rose to power, multiple women entered office in a period when issues of hard politics were ongoing. Feminism finds that women are elected into office to cope with soft politics related to issues of social injustice and poverty (True, 2005).

When Liberia-Peters took office, Aruba was leaving the Netherlands Antilles to obtain a *Status Aparte* and Shell departed from Curaçao leaving the economy in disorder. These developments forced her to deal with matters of business/economics and sovereignty. When taking unpopular yet necessary decisions, *De Tijd* (Van der Linden, 1988) labelled her the “Iron Lady”, to which she commented, “No, order has to be brought. Regardless of who is in government.” Similarly, De Jongh-Elhage orchestrated the dismantling of the Netherlands Antilles and negotiated Curaçao’s autonomous island status, which also falls under hard politics. Therefore, both women were not coping with soft politics nor were they abundantly soft in their approach. Thus, we suggest that feminist assumptions such as that of Jacqui True need to be modified. Perhaps it is because Curaçao has created different gender identities, whereby women have been taught to be independent and strong, that Western feminist conceptions fail to explain the Curaçao case. Even if these findings are only applicable to Curaçao, the female involvement in hard politics corroborates that identities are fluid and change in response to the requirements of the environment. Therefore, generalisations on gender cannot be made.

This chapter indicates that Curaçaoan women of various statuses, races and political stances were able to become Prime Minister. In fact, some of the most significant political issues in modern Curaçao were solved by women. Although in some instances, the pathways to power assisted the female rise to power, the pathways were not always mandatory. Rather, it seems that the examination of the cultural, political and international context was needed to further explain how the glass-ceiling was initially broken, why women were elected to deal with issues of hard politics in Curaçao, and why they were appointed heads of their party in the first place. While culture was the most significant contributor to the context, it may be argued that the International Year of the Woman acted as the catalyst. The case study on Guyana further demonstrates that context is important, as the country shows different stances on gender, race and ethnicity.

5.2: The Splintered Politics of Guyana

Unique from other presidential systems, the Guyanese state also has a Prime Minister; however, (s)he functions subordinate to the president (Sutton, 1999). Guyana starkly contrasts with Curaçao in terms of the number of women elected to power, as only one woman has

been President in the Afro-Indo Caribbean country and her tenure lasted only nineteen months. This is unsurprising, as literature strongly suggests that presidential systems are the most difficult political setting for women to rise to power (Whicker & Isaacs, 1999). This chapter discusses the variables in relation to Janet Jagan's rise to power in 1997. Furthermore, this chapter also analyses Jagan's short tenure and the status of women to establish why there has only been one woman holding executive power in Guyana.

Jagan, as the first female president of Guyana, struggled with coming to power relating to Jalalzai's (2004) existence of an initial glass-ceiling. In an interview with the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) (2015), Jagan asked, "If I were a man, would they have called me a 77-year old grandfather?" Since the twentieth-century, Guyanese politics have been dominated by two men, namely Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham who respectively held office in 1992 and 1980 (Hinds, 2011); however, as a woman Jagan faced difficulties in coming to power. Nonetheless, we shall return to the point of the glass ceiling at the end of this chapter to discuss whether it was ever truly broken and whether that has thwarted other women's rise to power in Guyana.

Jagan attended the University of Detroit, Wayne University, Michigan State College and the Cook County School of Nursing (Singh, 2000, p.153). Following Jalalzai's (2004) standards, Jagan had a high level of education; however, in terms of field of study, Jagan's nursing degree did not directly foster political experience. As was above identified in the Curaçao case study, the level of education is influential, while the field of study is not a decisive pathway to power. Hinds (2011), however, finds that Jagan's training as a nurse had equipped her with "crucial administrative skills, which would later be invaluable in her political life" (p.197). Notably, during her educational experiences, Jagan participated in leftist student organisations, eventually resulting in her joining of the Communist Youth League (Hinds, 2011, p. 196). Since communist ideologies shaped Jagan's socialist perspective as a civil servant, her membership of these groups should be considered essential. These findings also require that Jalalzai's framework for education should clearly be broadened, as extracurricular, skill training and other such activities can be educational experiences that also foster political acceleration. Evidently, Jagan's level of education and experiences at college were essential in shaping her political outlook and ambition.

Aside from education, familial ties were also significant to Jagan's rise to power. In 1943, at the age of 23, US-citizen Janet Rosenberg married Dr. Cheddi Jagan and relocated with him from Chicago to Guyana (Singh, 2000). Considered the country's political liberator, Dr. Jagan was the first popularly elected Prime Minister of (then) British Guiana. He led the country to its independence from Britain (Ibid). Dr. Jagan was revered as a national hero and as the "saviour of his [East Indian] race" (Hinds, 2011, p.196). His wife Janet soon became known as the white-skinned *bhowgie* (creole for elder sister-in-law) of the public (Ibid). Together, the couple established the Progressive People's Party (PPP). Thus, the population's identification of Cheddi with Janet strongly enhanced the perception of Mrs. Jagan.

Moreover, President Dr. Jagan's death in office in 1997 directly influenced Jagan's rise to power. According to Janet Jagan, her husband requested that she take his position, effectively allowing Jagan to assume the position of interim President (Hinds, 2011, p. 202). This reveals two important points. Firstly, that Jagan was directly able to assume the highest position in office because of her husband. Secondly, the significance of acting/interim woman executives reappears as an enabling factor for women to rise to power. In Curaçao, Römer and Liberia-Peters demonstrated that holding the interim position, as a trial, could increase the likelihood of becoming Prime Minister afterwards. However, Jagan's case did not endorse this hypothesis, for reasons that are elaborated upon below.

While in office as interim, Jagan was named PPP's party candidate for the upcoming elections (Ibid, p.202) and proceeded to win the elections. However, there was a great deal of unrest and the opposing People's National Congress (PNC) adamantly rejected the outcomes of the elections, claiming they were rigged despite the recount of the votes for a second time, rendering Guyana ungovernable (Luxner Interview, 1998). After nineteen months of presidency, Jagan resigned from office, as "ethnic strife [...] has dogged the country for six decades" (Hinds, 2011, p, 203). Further explanation of context is required to understand the unorthodox reaction from the general public towards Jagan's presidency. While familial ties were a pathway to power, it was not a guarantee to power in Jagan's case.

In the interview with PBS, Jagan states that "[h]ard work [with a chuckle]" was her main path to power (PBS, 2015). Leadership scholars such as Hinds (2011) and Singh (2000) agree with Jagan's statement, describing her lengthy fifty-five years of public service. Jagan started her career in public service by campaigning the British Guiana Labor Union, helping domestic

workers (Hinds, 2011). By 1946, Jagan co-founded the Women's Political and Economic Organisation (WPEO), which was focused on improving conditions for women in Guyana through better education and housing, as well as the Political Affairs Committee (PAC), which sought to end British colonial rule (Singh, 2000). In addition, Jagan was elected to Georgetown City Council and was General Secretary for *Thunder*, the PPP's publication (Ibid). While Singh (2000) states that Jagan's General Secretaryship attests for the PPP's confidence in Jagan, there are no descriptions on Jagan's interaction with the PPP's members. Nonetheless, as a career politician, she demonstrated dedication to politics, which bolstered her knowledge, experience and image as a politician. This ultimately resulted in her being equipped to take over upon her husband's death. Jagan's statement about her hard work is unquestionable; her years as a career politician established an undeniable link between Jagan and politics. However, it seems that her work was secondary to familial ties as her pathway to power, since Cheddi's death directly propelled her to Presidency.

This analysis is not aimed at downplaying Jagan's accomplishments as the first (and only) female President of Guyana. It is critical to acknowledge that Jagan managed to come to power in what scholars argue is the most unfavourable government system for women. In an interview for the *Miami Herald*, Jagan (1998) stated that the situation at the time in Guyana was further complicated, as the country was "consolidating democracy"⁴. This is significant, since literature emphasises the type of democratic system, but not the conditions of the democratic system. In the same interview, Jagan (1998) elaborated that she was in the process of setting up a committee with the UN to address the "new phenomenon developing [in restoring democracies] where opposition parties are refusing to accept the results of elections because the results do not suit their agenda." Thus, the conditions of the democracy rendered it difficult for Jagan to stay in power despite her election.

It is pivotal to discuss the complexities of ethnic culture in Guyana, as they define far-reaching aspects of society. Anthropologist Williams (1999) finds that, "[t]he period from 1960 to 1964 was marked by civil strife when the PPP, founded by Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham, split into two parties, the PPP and the PNC This allegedly divided the population along the lines of its major ethnic segments, with Africans supporting the PNC and East Indians supporting the PPP" (p.34-35). Thus, in Guyana, diverse ethnic factions were

⁴ Although Jagan does not specify, we presume that she is referring to Forbes Burnham's abuse of the Westminster model, which is elaborated upon below.

tied to different political parties. This phenomenon of ‘ethnopolitization’ has interrupted a nationalist movement in Guyana and has rendered a destabilisation of political life, unleashing inter-communal hostility between the main ethnicities (Garner, 2008, p.100).

An essential feature of the governmental system that allowed for ethnopolitization is the Westminster model (Sutton, 1999). As it stands, the Westminster political model has a dualistic two-party structure, however, during the 1970s, Burnham exploited this feature to provoke opposition between Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese politically, demonstrating the undermining power of the two-party system. While the Westminster model is known for bringing democracy to many Commonwealth nations, it has also been subject to manipulation, demonstrating that the model has been adapted to the Guyanese setting. Despite the manipulation, the Guyanese have not lost faith in the Westminster system (Ibid); however, we suspect that shifting towards another governmental system could ease the ethnopolitical divides. Whether this would give way to any feminist movement remains improbable, since the distinct groups also socialise women differently, whereby “[m]arriage and motherhood are considered ... inseparable elements of Indo-Guyanese women’s experience and identity ... whereas motherhood is considered to be the hallmark of adult feminine status for Afro-Guyanese women, it is not necessarily linked to marriage” (Peake & Trotz, 2002, p. 67). Thus, gender cultures also clash further indicating a hostile environment for women to come to power.

The abovementioned considerations raise the question: Was Jagan’s tenure interrupted because of her ethnicity? Jagan has stated that she does not believe that she was disliked for her whiteness, but finds that the opposition has used and deepened divisions in society for their benefit (Jagan, 1998). Conversely, Hinds (2001) states that, “it was a presidency that was the victim of the ethnic strife that has dogged the country for six decades...her presidency was doomed from the beginning” (p. 203). In addition, although Jagan was elected, it was the PNC and the Afro-Guyanese community who reacted negatively to her presidency (Ibid), demonstrating the persistence of ethnopolitics. Her international experience as an American in Guyana was incompatible with the Guyanese context; however as stated, her experiences abroad shaped Jagan’s ambitions, eventually catapulting her to power. Thus, Jagan’s ‘whiteness’ being a determining factor in resentment toward her is probable, while her affiliation with the PPP ‘Indo-party’ as a determining factor in resentment towards her is certain.

Jagan's political experience, education and familial ties allowed her to come to power. However, above all, Jagan's familial ties allowed her to sit as the interim president during which the glass-ceiling was never truly broken, as she was never accepted as a President due to Guyana's ethnic strife. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether the presidential system troubled Jagan's rise to power, since the conditions in the presidential system were unstable. Apart from the fact that presidential systems are less female-friendly, Jagan's inability to be accepted enabled the glass-ceiling to stay intact, thereby thwarting any other women executive to rise to power. This thesis continues to argue that context, specifically ethnic culture, is of the utmost importance, as was demonstrated by the ethnopolitization in Guyana. This ultimately splintered both women's movements and politics hindering not only Jagan, but any future female leader's path to power.

5.3: Fann D'Ayiti⁵

In a semi-presidential state, there is a pronounced division of power. This chapter considers both female Presidents (heads of state) and Prime Ministers (heads of government) in Haiti. The office of president ranks as the highest position in the country, since these are elected officials. Prime Ministers still have remarkable power, carrying responsibility for national defence and law enforcement. Prime Ministers are appointed by the President, but thereafter must be approved by parliament, making the process often tiring, lengthy and uneasy. Haiti has produced a total of four women leaders in government, one as President (Ertha Pascal-Trouillot in 1990) and three as Prime Ministers (Claudette Werleigh in 1995, Michele Pierre Louis in 2008 and Florence Duperval Guillaume in 2014). Coincidentally, all of the women in power in Haiti had a tenure of a year or less.

Pascal-Trouillot was the first and the last woman in Haiti to sit in the highest office. She was named provisional⁶ President and took an oath of office with the sole task to "organise general elections after which she would retire from public life" (Bellegrade-Smith, 2004, p.229). As Pascal-Trouillot was placed in office as provisional president and with limited tasks to accomplish, she was able to evade the then-existing glass-ceiling. Although Haiti has not had any other female president since, Pascal-Trouillot did seem to break the glass ceiling for female Prime Ministers, as only four years later, Werleigh was appointed Prime Minister.

⁵ Haitian creole for 'Women of Haiti'; also a prominent Haitian feminist group.

⁶ Similar to Interim Prime Minister/President.

The female leaders in Haiti all had a high level of education: Pascal-Trouillot held a law degree from Ecole de Droit des Gonaves in Port-au-Prince, making her the first female lawyer of Haiti (Bute & Harmer, 1997, p. 51); Werleigh held a license in law and economics from a university in Port-au-Prince (Skard, 2014, p.264-5); Pierre-Louis was also educated in economics possessing a master's degree from Queens College of the City University of New York (Ibid); and Duperval Guillaume has a doctorate from the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy at the State University of Haiti, and was trained at Harvard University and other academic institutes in Michigan, Baltimore, Florida, Dakar and Uganda (Saint-Pre, 2014). Out of all the case studies, the Haitian case demonstrates most clearly that education is pivotal to a woman's rise to power. In a country where males are significantly better educated—the male literacy rate is approximately 5% higher than the female counterpart (UNICEF, 2015)—these women are not only quite exceptional, but also clearly elite, confirming Marxist understandings of (unequal) education and class correlations. In addition, the areas of study of these women were also significant, as they would all lead to professional careers in respective fields of politics.

In terms of familial ties, the Haitian case is the only instance through which all women rose to power without being widows, sisters or wives of previously high ranking-male individuals (Skard, 2014). This contradicts Bellgrade-Smith (2004), who states that, “most Haitian women in positions of political power have acquired those positions through their associations or relationships with powerful males” (p.37). He proceeds by listing women such as the wife of François Duvalier, Simone Ovide, the ex-wife of Jean-Claude Duvalier, Michele Bennet and daughter/sister of the Duvaliers, Marie-Denise Duvalier, as politically powerful women who were related to the Presidents François and Jean-Claude Duvalier (Ibid). However, his list does not include twenty-first century examples as this study does, indicating that change has come about. The only modern notable familial ties are that of Pascal-Trouillot, whose husband was first her mentor at law school and Werleigh's father, who was a member of parliament, although he had died before she was born (Bute & Harmer, 1997; Skard, 2014). While these males may have been role models for the women, their connections in relation to these males were not the direct reason for their appointment.

The Haiti case also demonstrates the importance of political and administrative experience as a pathway to power. Pascal-Trouillot, as the first female lawyer in Haiti, was a judge in federal courts and later the first woman Justice of the Supreme Court of Haiti (Bellegrade-

Smith, 2004). As she was concerned with adult literacy, Werleigh started a school for adults that is still in operation after thirty-three years. Her work was noticed by government officials, leading to her appointment during Pascal-Trouillot's provisional presidency as the Minister of Social Affairs, and thereafter, as an executive director of the Washington Office⁷ in Haiti and as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Religions (Skard, 2014). Similarly, Pierre Louis was working for (government) agencies when she was invited to join Aristide's private cabinet, later returning to government agency 'FOKAL' (Fondasyon konesane ak libète⁸) before being appointed Prime Minister.

Duperval had extensive medical and health expertise due to residencies abroad as a doctor. She complimented these residencies with a membership at the Management Sciences of Health for sixteen years and a function as the medical director at a private NGO for Development of Health Activities in Haiti (Saint-Pre, 2014). Altogether, she had a rich resume in the area of health, ultimately securing her a position as Minister of Public Health and Population before her Prime Ministership. Evidently, the women in power in Haiti were all educated and trained in areas that would benefit their political careers. It is also noteworthy that these women were not set out on going into politics, but that politics found them unlike De Jongh-Elhage, Römer and Jagan.

The Haitian semi-presidential system also allowed women to come to power, since the appointment of the Prime Minister is done by the President. There is a greater likelihood of a woman Prime Minister than a woman President. Nonetheless, a Prime Minister must be approved by parliament, which can complicate the process. However, as the appointment of Pascal-Trouillot demonstrated, it is possible for women to hold this position and it is peculiar that despite a relatively favourable cultural context, no women have made it to Presidential power in Haiti since Pascal-Trouillot.

With regard to gender culture, Bellegrade-Smith (2004) argues that women in Haiti are less oppressed than those elsewhere in the Caribbean, as in comparison with the political patriarchy of the Judeo-Christian world, Voodoo's ideological organisation places women at the centre of life. Nonetheless, the discrepancy in the literacy rates between the sexes and the high rape rate (Charles, 1995) demonstrate that males occupy dominant positions in society.

⁷ US human rights advocacy agency.

⁸ Foundation of Knowledge and Freedom in Haitian creole.

While Bellegrade-Smith (2004) indicates the effects of the Voodoo heritage, it should be noted that Voodoo is mostly practiced in the rural sites of Haiti. Charles (1995) focuses on urban Haitians and found that patriarchy was a significant feature of Haitian life, making her work an important addition to this study. Even though Bellegrade-Smith and Charles utilise different reasoning, they demonstrate that women in Haiti have a more distinctly politicised/valued role in their contextual society compared to women in most Caribbean or Latin American countries.

According to Charles (1995), in urban areas, Haiti was patriarchal due to Western colonialism and interventions. However, she ironically argues that with the rise of the Duvaliers, patriarchy was abolished (Ibid). The Duvaliers called for patriotic women of the state, rather than self-sacrificing mothers that were far removed from politics (Ibid). This was to create a stronger allegiance between the state and women, which actually politicised women. Under the Duvaliers, the institutionalisation of violence took place especially through the systematic targeting of women (Bernard & Burt, 1969). This contrasts with most authoritarian regimes where women are “privileged” to be spared from violence as they are seen as the “innocent” gender (Charles, 1995, p.139). Although this might be perceived as patriarchal violence against women, Charles (1995) argues that the systemic targeting of women should be understood as the politicisation of women, which rarely occurs in patriarchal societies. Paradoxically, this creates gender equality fostering a new type of feminist movement. These experiences led to the further proliferation and strengthening of feminist groups such as Fanm d’Ayiti and Comite Feminin (Bellegrade-Smith, 2004).

Furthermore, the widespread Haitian Diaspora that stretched to Canada and America allowed women to observe different treatment of women abroad. Upon return, over 60% of the women became part of feminist groups, further strengthening their position in society (Charles, 1995, p. 152) and demonstrating the influence of international contextualisation. In 1990, in the midst of this new feminism, Haiti’s first democratic elections took place (Skard, 2014). These elections were overseen by no other than Ertha Pascal-Trouillot, Haiti’s first provisional woman president (Ibid). The new social movements, in combination with socio-historic considerations, brought about by the Duvalier regime that broke away from patriarchy, prove that the context is as essential as the pathways to power.

In addition, in Haiti, class distinctions play an influential role in society. All of the women with power had a high level of educational experiences, which is not only uncommon for women, but for the general Haitian population. This is because these women came from the upper/middle class. Charles (1995) identifies that there are three important social groups in Haiti that are all of African descent, but are distinct in their standing and relations to power. The upper and middle class together make up only 10% of the population (Ibid). The upper class is made up of black rural elites and mulattoes, whereas the middle class consists of white Creoles, Haitians of Arab-descendent and urban elites. Finally, the peasants and workers are at the lowest end of the power spectrum, making up 90% of the population (Charles, 1995, p.144). It is in the lower/working class that female participation is significant, as women are central to agricultural activities, working the field and markets. Paradoxically, in Haiti, women have greater participation and independence in their community when they are less educated, but they cannot make it into politics. In addition, it appears that important class divisions are linked to the existing ethnic context.

Although Haiti has managed to create an intriguing feminist movement and bring to the highest offices four female executives, it can be argued that only when all women are mobilised, there can be a truly feminist development that recognises not only equality amongst genders, but also equality amongst women. If we contemplate that, “[p]atriarchy not only exists as a men’s power system over women, but as a system of power hierarchies between different groups of men and also between different masculinities” (Mohammed, 2004, p.74), we can deduce that for women, there can also be various systems of oppression as the Haitian case suggests. In Haiti, class stratifications are imminent in politics, oppressing the lower class and demonstrating interconnectivity at play. Furthermore, this demonstrates that we cannot speak of ‘woman’ as a unitary category, since not all women are represented equally in Haiti demonstrating that there are many manifestations of ‘woman’.

Interestingly, Haitian ex-Prime Minister Werleigh (1989) states that “Haitian women [lower/working class] are not just fighting for women’s issues or equality for men. Most of them are fighting for a better society” (p.13). If this is the case, lower class Haitian women present the essence of Third Wave feminism that focuses on egalitarianism for everyone. It would be remarkable if such women had the chance to rise from the lower class into occupations related to political representation.

In sum, Haiti demonstrates the utility of the pathways to power particularly through education, resume and political experience for *certain* women. However, unlike the other cases and because class stratification took precedence, the (elite) Haitian women did not require familial ties to catapult them to the top. In addition, the international and gender context were influential factors that permitted women to come to power through a new kind of feminism caused by the Duvalierist state. Even with this new wave of feminism, women from the rural areas were not represented as political leaders, which questions the true emancipation of all women. Furthermore, it is notable that the ratio of Presidents to Prime Ministers in Haiti supports current studies that state that Presidential positions are more difficult for women to attain than Prime Minister positions. Although the reasoning remains unclear, it may indicate an intact glass-ceiling for the Presidential position.

6: Critical Reflection: Coherent Diversities in the Caribbean

In congruence with feminist theory, Curaçao came closest to resembling an egalitarian society for women both within the gender and in relation to men. Curaçao has elected women of various ethnicity, education levels and political experiences, portraying a significant level of egalitarianism. Furthermore, Curaçao exemplified the complimentary/dualistic relationship between male and female gender identity formation. Guyana seems to be the least advanced in this sense, as it has produced the fewest number of women on the highest offices and because of its patriarchal contextual landscape that has remained intact. In addition, the case highlighted the significance of intersectional systems of oppression, since female movements are splintered by ethnopolitics. While Haiti has only technically had one female executive, it has produced three women who have complimented the position of the head of state. More importantly, as the socio-historical observations demonstrated, Haitian women were relinquished from patriarchy under the Duvalierist state.

A reoccurring theme throughout this thesis was the agency of the interim or provisional executive. While it could be deemed a deficient position, our findings demonstrated the converse, since the women holding this office were recognised for their capability of running a country. The interim position also proved to have great significance in relation to the glass-ceiling. In all three cases, the first female executives—Da Costa Gomez, Jagan and Pascal-Trouillot—were unelected, interim executives. In addition, more than half—five out of nine—

of the women studied in this research held the interim position, and for two of those women, the interim position was followed by their democratic election. These are substantial numbers suggesting that becoming an interim executive in itself can be a deviant pathway to power. Notably, only Curaçao proceeded to elect more executive women Prime Ministers after the shattering glass-ceiling, whereas Haiti only appointed Prime Ministers.

This thesis also indicated that current studies on the glass-ceiling might need elaboration. The glass-ceiling can be perceived as the barrier placed by males, but also as the lack of role models that socialise women into believing that executive positions are not for women. Former Managing Director at Goldman Sachs Laura Liswood (2009) suggests that this socialisation process is the “power of the mirror” (p.260). Although Liswood is not a scholar, her statement may be valuable to consider since the mirror can explain why Haiti has failed to yield additional female Presidents, why Curaçao had a steady flow of female executives, and why Guyana has remained stagnant. Future studies should look at how role models affect the glass-ceiling and female leadership in the Caribbean to corroborate this suggestion.

Finally, this study demonstrated that while pathways optimise women’s rise to power, other variables such as race and class intersect and can undermine female executives. “Race, class and gender operate in a synergistic fashion as vehicles of oppression” (Rheddock, 2004, p.106) and this study fully exemplified these conditions particularly in Guyana and Haiti. In Guyana, race and gender intersect to produce harsher conditions for women depending on their ethnicity, whereas in Haiti, class distinctions overlap with gender. This a valuable discovery, as upper class female executives may advocate the interests of their class rather than those of their gender.

7: Conclusion

The three case studies demonstrated a range of ramifications and combinations of factors when answering the research question. Education, familial ties, political resume, the glass-ceiling and the governmental system each yielded varying results in the different locations. Nonetheless, all were at some point employed by the women to propel them to power, demonstrating their utility. The high level of education factor was present in eight of the nine cases, making it the most accessed pathway to power, followed by the familial ties, which

proved to be paramount in the creating of some executives. However, the pathways should not be seen as independent factors, but rather as complimentary puzzle pieces that fit together.

The Curaçao case revealed that the pathways to power were not always essential, whereas Haiti followed the prescription of the pathways exceptionally, with the exception of the familial ties pathway. However, Curaçao, Guyana and Haiti all demonstrated that the domestic context, whether in terms of class, ethnicity or gender, produced the conditions that allowed for the pathways to function. These findings give weight to feminist logic, which finds that gender identities are formed according to the society within which one lives, further justifying this thesis' Pan-Caribbean approach. The inconsistencies of the gender identities are accentuated when analysing the varying forms of patriarchy of each country, be it Afro-Patriarchy, Indo-Patriarchy or absent-male Patriarchy.

In Curaçao, *machismo* was expressed through the absence of men, which challenged women to become independent and confident members of society. In Guyana, patriarchy has remained since the advent of colonialism and has been overshadowed by the prominent issue of ethnopolitics. Finally, in Haiti, women were able to escape patriarchy because of the Duvaliers' politicisation of women. Each of these experiences constructed a different context and consequently a woman could (or could not) pursue politics. The distinct patriarchal experiences are reflected in the numbers of female executives: Curaçao's many female executives, Guyana's one woman executive and Haiti's various female leaders. It appears that the context held greater implications for women's rise to power than the pathways. Nonetheless, context should not undermine the pathways—and vice-versa—as merely a good context will not guarantee a woman's success. Context must always be supplemented with attributes such as educational skills or political resume. The case studies show that pathways to power and the context work in tandem to yield female executives.

This study repeatedly encountered the (paradox of) coexistence of matriarchy and patriarchy. While the two are often seen as incompatible hierarchies, in this study, matrifocal and patrifocal behaviours intersect and each system holds its own levels of oppression. Each state produced its own type of patriarchy, which further supports critical studies that state that genders are constantly constructed in relation to other genders and the environment. This could explain why western scholars perceive the Caribbean as an enigma where patriarchal societies yield female executives, since it is a common misconception that patriarchy and

women-men relationships must be identical across the globe. Additional critical studies should be carried out to analyse the less-recognised inequalities within Caribbean matriarchies to fully grasp all systems of oppression. Nonetheless, this study finds that despite colonial control in the past, the Caribbean has managed to create its own diverse, intriguing and distinct identities independent of the West, leading to various ways for women to rise to power.

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